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Application No.: 09/880,769

Docket No.: 60680-1647

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A gasket comprising at least one metal layer having at least one through-hole and at least one metal ring welded thereto, said at least one metal ring being arranged around said at least one through-hole, a welding bead, said at least one metal ring being welded to said at least one metal layer over said welding bead, said welding bead maintaining said at least one metal layer and said at least one metal ring in a spaced-apart relationship, and wherein said welding bead extends continuously around said at least one through-hole.

2. (Previously Presented) The gasket according to claim 1, wherein said at least one metal layer and said at least one metal ring are spaced from each other by a distance which is constant around said at least one through-hole.

3. (Previously Presented) The gasket according to claim 1, wherein said at least one layer and said at least one metal ring are spaced from each other by a distance which varies around said at least one through-hole.

4. (Original) The gasket according to claim 1, wherein said welding bead is compressible.

5. (Original) The gasket according to claim 1, wherein said at least one metal layer is made of a material selected from the list of aluminum, sheet steel, stainless steel, spring steel and carbon steel.

6. (Original) The gasket according to claim 1, wherein said at least one metal ring is made of a material selected from the list of copper, bronze, aluminum, sheet steel, stainless steel, spring steel and carbon steel.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) A gasket comprising at least one metal layer having at least one through-hole and at least one metal ring welded thereto, said at least one metal ring being arranged around said at least one through-hole, a welding bead, said at least one metal ring being welded to said at least one metal layer over said welding bead, said welding bead extending

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continuously around said at least one through-hole, said welding bead maintaining said at least one metal layer and said at least one metal ring in a spaced-apart relationship and said at least one metal layer comprising at least one sealing bead.

9. (Previously Presented) The gasket according to claim 8, wherein said sealing bead extends around said at least one metal ring.

10. (Original) The gasket according to claim 9, wherein a further metal ring is arranged around the sealing bead.

11. (Previously Presented) The gasket according to claim 8, wherein said at least one metal ring extends around the sealing bead.

12. (Previously Presented) The gasket according to claim 8, wherein said welding bead extends within the sealing bead.

13. (Previously Presented) The gasket according to claim 1, wherein the gasket comprises two adjacent metal layers having sealing beads located in each metal layer and arranged opposite with respect to each other.

14. (Previously Presented) The gasket according to claim 1, wherein the gasket comprises two adjacent metal layers having sealing beads located in each metal layer and arranged offset with respect to each other.

15. (Original) The gasket according to claim 1, wherein the gasket comprises two metal layers, at least one of which has an indentation or cranking for symmetrically aligning the metal ring.

16. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a gasket having at least one metal layer, and at least one metal ring, said metal layer having at least one through-hole comprising generating a welding bead in one of said metal layer and said metal ring and generating a welding joint between the metal layer and the metal ring by projection welding, said welding bead maintains said at least one metal layer and said at least one metal ring in a spaced-apart relationship, and wherein said welding bead extends continuously around said at least one

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through-hole.

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, comprising generating the welding bead with a shape selected from the list of U-shaped, V-shaped, Ω -shaped and trapezoidal cross section.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, comprising generating the welding bead in the metal layer and generating a sealing bead in the metal layer during the generational welding bead in the metal layer.

19. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, comprising discharging a capacitance to generate a welding current for generating the projection welding joint.

20. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, comprising at least one deformation limiter within the welding bead during the generation of the welding joint.

21. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16, comprising arranging at least one abutment element outside the welding bead during generation of the welding joint.